Staff Memorandum

To	Mayor A. Nuttall and Members of Council
Subject	Advancing Artificial Intelligence at the City of Barrie
Date	March 25,2026
Ward	All
From	R. Nolan, Director of Information Technology
Executive Member Approval	R. James-Reid, General Manager of Access Barrie
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide City Council with an overview of the City's Artificial Intelligence (AI) program, summarizing progress, current priorities, and next steps. Through the Digital Customer Service and Workforce Innovation project (IT1075) approved as part of the 2024 Business Plan and Budget, the City is actively evaluating opportunities for AI to enhance service delivery, drive operational efficiencies, and improve employee and citizen experiences. On June 18, 2025, Council also approved a 2-year pilot project to pursue programs and services supported by Canadian Owned/Based Artificial Intelligence companies (25-G-147).

By leveraging AI, the City of Barrie aims to unlock new opportunities for innovation, responsiveness, and informed decision making, while ensuring responsible and ethical use. Staff are working in many different areas to identify and evaluate the possibilities, including:

- Enriching employee experiences by streamlining routine tasks and providing fast and efficient access to data and information.
- Reinventing citizen engagement by creating new ways of interacting and enhancing existing experiences with AI-powered solutions which can enable more personalized, timely, and accessible engagement with City services.
- Reshaping business processes through automation and intelligent decision making, leading to more efficient and consistent service delivery and the possibility of expanded service levels.
- Enhancing decision making and improving outcomes by using AI to help analyze information more effectively, uncover data-driven insights, and bring clarity through advanced data modelling.

Before pursuing the first AI projects, the Information Technology Department engaged senior leaders from across the City to discuss the opportunities, risks, benefits and challenges presented by AI. These important conversations led to an AI Framework which established the City's commitment to leveraging AI technologies to deliver public value while upholding transparency, accountability, and trust. This guiding document expresses the City’s intention to “investigate and pursue opportunities for Artificial Intelligence to help transform the services delivered to citizens, with the goal of providing innovative, effective, and efficient services.”

Guided by the AI Framework, staff have worked over the past 2 years to advance individual AI use among City employees while fostering a culture of awareness and accountability. In January 2025, employees were provided with important preliminary guidance on the “do’s and don’ts” of using AI. Since then, staff have delivered more detailed training on how to use AI safe and responsible ways, and an e-training module on this topic is being finalized. The rollout of Copilot, an AI productivity assistant, is underway and will further support staff in handling complex tasks efficiently and securely.

Over the past year, the practical applications of AI have been explored through several prototypes, proof-of-concepts and pilot projects. These initiatives have been important to not only expanding the City’s AI capabilities, but also to identify the skillsets, data, and technology foundations which are critical to successfully implementing more complex solutions. Notably, the Barrie.ca AI-powered agent was launched in May of 2025, to enhance citizen service through by providing high quality responses based on information from the Barrie.ca website – 24 hours/day, and in any language. With over 5,000 interactions in the first 10 months, this important new interaction channel has demonstrated strong community interest and engagement. Over the last four months, another pilot project evaluated an AI tool that delivers reminders to defendants with outstanding court services fines. The solution provides detailed information through live, AI-powered voice and text message interactions, and can also answer any questions individuals might have. This pilot project has demonstrated the potential for AI to help the City of Barrie expand service levels by helping to manage interactions and communications in many other areas.

For 2026, several priority projects are being actively advanced to further integrate AI into City operations. These opportunities include:

- AI-driven data analysis and communications tools to help residents avoid high-consumption water bills.
- A proof-of-concept (POC) within Development Services to evaluate opportunities for AI to enhance the work of the City’s expert planning staff to streamline permitting and approvals.
- Using AI to automate the collection of parking usage data, along with possibilities for AI to surface data-driven insights to inform operational decisions and policies, through deep analysis and modelling.
- An advanced platform of Small Business Centre Expert AI Agents which will provide access to detailed information and tailored support for local entrepreneurs and businesses across a broad range of topics – including licensing, zoning, training, funding and mentorship.

The City of Barrie is committed to adopting AI responsibly, guided by its AI Framework and a commitment to transparency, public trust, and service excellence. Key initiatives are underway to bring real benefits to the community while providing insights that will inform future plans to maximize the benefits of AI for Barrie’s residents, businesses, and visitors. The next steps involve scaling successful pilot projects, expanding training programs, and continually assessing how AI can help support the City of Barrie’s strategic priorities.

Appendix:

Not Applicable

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File #:

Not Applicable

Pending #:

Not Applicable